

# He restores my soul

He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Ps 23:3

## Introduction

How superficially we read Scripture. Perhaps we have read Ps 23:3 hundreds of times and thought nothing of its meaning. What does it mean for God to restore my soul?

## Restoration

To restore something means restoration – bringing something dead or tarnished back to life and lustre.

If something needs restoration then it has died or is in a serious condition. It is damaged and needs repairing.

If you restore a car it needs extensive repair work and rebuilding in order to run again. It needs restoring. It currently does not work but will work again after restoration. The work may need doing because of: age, wear and tear, collision damage, maltreatment (i.e. lack of maintenance) or malicious damage.

If a house is in a run down condition and is not good enough to live in it needs restoration, refurbishment. After various works are done to the house it can again be lived in.

What kind of damage is a human soul in that it needs restoration?

## What is the soul?

The soul is the inner life of man. It is the seat of the human personality. It is the executive of life.

It comprises of the volition (will), emotions (affections) and the intellect (mind). It is also connected to the heart, which is the interchange between the human spirit and the soul (the chief link being the higher mind or *nous*, which is present in the soul and the spirit). For Biblical teaching explaining all this see my several papers analysing it in depth.

The balance of the will, emotions and mind determine the character of the person. Some people are more emotional; some are wilful, some are intellectual. What is necessary for a stable life is a balance of all three in harmony with no single component dominating the others. Note the disturbance of an overly emotional person or a person dominated by the will or a dull, overly intellectual pedant.

The soul is a neutral vessel; a holy person and a sinful person both have a soul that is utilised to determine the actions of the body. The soul that is dominated by holiness uses the body for holiness and righteousness; the soul that has been tarnished by evil thoughts and desires commands the body to be used in sinful pursuits.

The soul, then, can be the vessel of the old man (nature) when it is allowed to be led by sin; then the soul become the flesh. But it is the vessel of holiness when the soul is directed by the Holy Spirit within the human spirit, through the choices of the heart, to pursue good. It is then the new nature.

The antagonism between the old man and the new man is the basis of the war within ourselves requiring right choices. When the soul gives in to satanic temptation assuming evil desires it becomes the old man; the flesh. When the soul obeys the Holy Spirit it becomes the new man.

The soul can therefore be damaged by sin, requiring restoration.

There are other things that can damage the soul.

Trauma can damage the emotions, will and intellect. Trauma can be caused by many things such as bereavement, grief of any kind, pain and suffering, verbal attacks, physical attacks, psychological attacks, medical problems and so on. If these are allowed to continue damaging the soul instead of living by faith, trusting in God, then the soul will need restoration.

Deception can damage the soul. If a Christian continues to focus upon Christ and live faithfully, deception is unlikely; but if you are off guard deception is inevitable. Deception may not immediately involve sin but it renders a person vulnerable to all sorts of negativity; whether this be trauma, depression or unrighteousness. Deception always leads to going astray at the least but domination by Satan at the worst. Both of these damage every aspect of the soul. For example, deception destroys truth in the mind and substitutes lies leading to instability of the intellect. Deception also masquerades as something spiritual that perverts the emotions; emotionalism is presented as spirituality which leads to mysticism. Deception of the volition leads to a person ignoring the will of God and choosing a false path that they are determined to travel on.

The root of the soul is the heart; this is the main controlling organ of the personality which the soul, as executive, arranges to follow. This is why the heart must be guarded above all else.

Keep [guard, watch over] your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. Prov 4:23

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. Matt 12:35

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man. Matt 15:19-20

## Reasons for restoration of the soul

### **Wear and tear**

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit. Ps 51:12

Or being burned out. This can be caused by overwork, opposition, sickness, grief and bereavement. There is no overt sin involved, no deception and no outright persecution; it is

simply becoming worn out through too many issues at once. This primarily affects the body in tiredness and fatigue, sometimes leading to minor illness. However, such fatigue can also create depression or even anxiety.

It is vital that this is acted upon immediately and not prolonged.

If it is caused by overwork – take a break and relax; get plenty of sleep. If it is bereavement allow yourself to grieve properly for the appropriate time (it varies amongst people) and allow yourself to be comforted. If it is sickness, rest and take the appropriate actions; do not continue working. If it is opposition from men, forgive them and bless them. Give the barbs of their accusations to God to deal with. Do not harbour bitterness. Overcome evil with good. If it is opposition from Satan, resist him firm in the faith and seek God's strength; he is your shield.

All of these things can depress the soul so that it needs restoration.

### **Trauma**

Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD *will be* a light to me. Micah 7:8

Such as persecution, trials, accidents, sickness. Trials can cause a type of grief or sorrow (1 Pt 1:6). This can produce heaviness of spirit or a downcast soul. In this situation it is vital that your will is directed to raise your soul up. This involves looking to God, trusting in God, hoping in God and casting your burdens on him.

Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore I will remember You. Ps 42:5-6

Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God. Ps 42:11

Cast your burden on the LORD, And He shall sustain you. Ps 55:22

Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring *it* to pass. Ps 37:5

'Commit' in Ps 37:5 is really the word 'roll'. Some burdens are too heavy for us even to cast them upon God and we must roll them to the Lord.

Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah. Ps 62:8

My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me. Ps 63:8

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of

God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Phil 4:6-7

Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. 1 Pt 5:7

## Sin

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Ps 51:10

Sin must be dealt with quickly. It must be confessed to God (and sometimes to those offended if public) and the cleansing blood of Christ in the heart sought.

If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 Jn 1:7-9

One should grieve or mourn for one's sin; it should be deeply regretted (Jm 4:8-10; 2 Cor 7:9-11). This sorrow leads to repentance – changing the direction of your life to follow Christ (2 Cor 7:10).

Do not believe the lies of those that say that Christians do not repent after conversion; sin requires a change of mind. Repentance (*metanoia*) is literally: a change of mind. Repentance is lifelong following Christ. In every failure of mind, repentance is a change of thought to turn from the error and follow Christ. In every sin, repentance is turning from the sin to obeying God. Repentance is putting on the new man and putting off the old man.

Repentance from a life of dead works (Heb 6:1), from our old estate, coupled with saving faith resulting in conversion, is not repeated; a Christian's repentance following sins committed and error is always necessary. Conversion is not repeated; repentance, as a Christian, must follow the committal of sins. Only a perfect mind never making a mistake need not repent but we make many mistakes (Jam 3:2).

Do not believe the lies of those who say that Christians are never guilty but are always righteous because of salvation. This is antinomianism.<sup>1</sup> Paul upbraided Peter saying that he stood condemned by avoiding Gentile brethren (Gal 2:11; 'blamed' [*kataginosko*] means 'condemned'). 'If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us' (1 Jn 1:10). Whenever we sin and put on the old nature, the wrong mind, we stand condemned. In the new nature we are not condemned; 'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus' (Rm 8:1).

Antinomians also misrepresent the doctrine of sanctification. They point to legal or definitive sanctification that cleansed us in a single past event at conversion (1 Cor 6:11). This is the past tense of sanctification that affected our spirit. But there are two more forms of sanctification. Present sanctification is progressive sanctification (Heb 2:11, 10:14); the

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<sup>1</sup> Meaning 'against law'; used of Christians that deny that God's law is to be obeyed after conversion because they are in the Spirit. Note the many times we are commanded to obey God's commandments (e.g. Jn 14:15, 21, 15:10; 1 Cor 7:19; 1 Jn 2:3). A curse is upon those who stray from the commandments of God (Ps 119:21).

ongoing sanctification of the soul as we learn and progress in holiness by cleansing the soul after mistakes. Final sanctification is the complete sanctification of the whole person at the coming of Christ so that we are fitted for heaven (1 Thess 5:23).

Definitive sanctification does not mean that we never sin again; that is the error of perfectionism or instant sanctification. It enables us to stand in heaven and commune with God in our spirit. One earth our sins require constant cleansing and progressive sanctification as we mature.

The goodness of God leads you to repentance? Rm 2:4

Sin disturbs the soul; it must be dealt with swiftly.

### **Lack of maintenance**

The prime issue here is problems caused by a failure to be careful about what you believe, feed upon or trust in.

#### *Deception: failure to renew the mind*

There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction ... By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words. 2 Peter 2:1-3

Let no one deceive you by any means. 2 Thess 2:3

Little children, let no one deceive you. 1 Jn 3:7

Let no one deceive himself. 1 Cor 3:18

Some Christians think that being saved means that they cannot be deceived; this is nonsense. Just as one can sin after conversion due to having an old nature until the Lord returns and we are changed, so also one can think wrong things and accept false teachings. This is even more likely if we follow false teachers (2 Pt 2:1), false brethren (2 Cor 11:26; Gal 2:4), false apostles (2 Cor 11:13), and false prophets (1 Jn 4:1) or even false christs (Matt 24:24). The modern church is full of false leaders.

The sources of deception are many and various, 'many deceivers have gone out into the world; (2 Jn 1:7). We can be deceived by:

- Ourselves: 'we deceive ourselves' (1 Jn 1:8). 'Let no one deceive himself' (1 Cor 3:18).
- Evil men: 'But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived' (2 Tim 3:13).
- False teachers: 'But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you ... carousing in their own deceptions' (2 Pt 2:1, 13).
- Schismatics: 'I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple' (Rm 16:17-18).

- False Christs: ‘many will come in My name, saying, “I am the Christ”, and will deceive many’ (Matt 24:5).
- False apostles: ‘For such are false apostles, deceitful workers’ (2 Cor 11:13).
- False prophets: ‘false prophets will rise up and deceive many’ (Matt 24:11).
- False brethren: ‘And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage)’ (Gal 2:4).
- Speakers with empty, persuasive words: ‘Let no one deceive you with empty words’ (Eph 5:5). ‘Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words’ (Col 2:4).
- Tricksters, plotters: ‘every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting’ (Eph 4:14).
- Impostors: ‘evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived’ (2 Tim 3:13).
- Insubordinate men, especially Jews: ‘For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision’ (Titus 1:10).
- Worldly philosophers: ‘Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ’ (Col 2:8).
- Demons: ‘Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons’ (1 Tim 4:1).
- Satan: ‘He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, ... so that he should deceive the nations no more’ (Rev 20:2-3).

This is why the apostles of Christ constantly urge believers to be diligent in faithfulness, knowledge, discernment and wisdom. If you fail to follow the Lord Jesus or fail to be filled with the Spirit of Jesus you will be deceived; only in Jesus are the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3). You must be renewed in the spirit of your mind by putting off the old nature (Rm 12:2; Eph 4:23). You must be constantly growing in wisdom and knowledge (Prov 2:6; Col 1:9). This is spiritual maintenance.

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment. Phil 1:9

**ASIDE:** *Note about church leaders.* Since there are false teachers, false brethren, false prophets, false apostles and false Christs, it is vital that you examine and assess church leaders - especially if they claim to be something special like a prophet or apostle. Anyone claiming to be Christ must be avoided like the plague (e.g. Mother Ann Lee of the Shakers or Rev Moon of the Unification Church). Anyone claiming to be a formal prophet as a leader must be avoided since that office was terminated after John the Baptist (Matt 11:13; Lk 16:16). Anyone claiming to be an apostle, as a church leader, should be avoided since after the 12 (apostles of the Lamb, Rev 21:14), apostles were simply missionaries (apostles of the churches, 2 Cor 8:23; ‘messengers’ = *apostolos*) sent to plant churches and then return home. Apostles do not lead the local church - only elders do. In fact, anyone emphasising a formal leadership position should be suspect. Local church leaders are fathers and shepherds who do not rely upon formal authority but simply care for people.

### *Failure to feed on the Lord*

Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Ps 37:3

The soul is stabilised as it is directed by the human spirit to follow the direction of God given by his Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives knowledge and direction by intuition and communion in the spirit, which then directs the heart, which tells the soul how to direct the body with the right choices. This is walking in faithfulness.

This process involves trusting in God, feeding upon God, being directed by God's faithfulness, which results in good works.

This process of feeding upon God is similar to other processes, such as: being filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18), being guided by God (Ps 78:72), abiding in Jesus (Jn 15:4), walking in the light (1 Jn 1:7), putting on the new man (Eph 4:22-24) and so on.

When this process is reversed the soul is destabilised and even damaged. Such as the body dominating the choices according to the flesh (the flesh is the soul dominated by the old nature). Or the soul acting independently from the spirit – acting according to emotions, will or intellect alone. In short – self will. This doesn't have to involve obvious sin; it can be independent decisions ignoring God.

### *The effects of a seared conscience*

The conscience is in the human spirit and is also a part of the heart. The conscience can be seared – burned and damaged: 'Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron' (1 Tim 4:1-2).]

Searing can stop bleeding and deaden tissues; it burns away life and makes barren.

Giving in to habitual sin and addictions, following demonic temptation or satanic teaching, results in diving deep into lawlessness that permanently damages the conscience. This damaged conscience then directs the soul to act sinfully and a vicious cycle begins. It is very difficult to get someone out of this damage. This is why sins must be confessed immediately and God's forgiveness sought.

The conscience must be obeyed always; it is the voice of God's law in the heart if instructed properly. This is why the consciousness must be carefully taught as the mind is renewed. A faulty conscience, badly taught, will enforce wrong things (see Paul's argument in 1 Cor 8). An informed conscience brings freedom.

### *A lack of prayer and communion*

Prayer is the lifeblood of our relationship with God in the Spirit. It should not be something done legalistically or ritually, it should be like eating food – a vital part of our daily routine that keeps us alive and something to be enjoyed. If you love God, you will want to communicate with him.

Prayer is not something only performed at certain regular times of the day; that is one aspect that we discipline ourselves to do. Prayer, however, should be offered up naturally throughout the day as we feel necessary. Thus we can praise God continually. We can ask

for help at any time. We can ask for wisdom when we need it. We can intercede for others when we become aware of their needs. Prayer is thus a life-flow interchange of communication and communion.

Prayer thus engages the soul in a heavenly enterprise. It engages the mind as we think through our petitions. It enlists the emotions as we feel adoration for God or affection for someone prayed for. It utilises the volition as we choose to pray and choose our petitions or bend the knee in submission in worship.

Prayer is, therefore, vital for a healthy soul, directed towards God.

A lack of diligent prayer will result in a dried up soul that is slothful and badly maintained. The mind will not be sharp; the emotions will be over-sensitive and insecure while the volition will be depressed and uncertain.

### **Malicious damage**

When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him. Isa 59:19

This is enemy attack causing oppression, temptation, resistance, and physical persecution. This can cause the emotions to be depressed; the mind to become confused and the will to become supine. The soul needs restoration.

The key to this restoration is faith that the Lord is a shield and buckler against the enemy.

Plead my cause, O LORD, with those who strive with me; Fight against those who fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help. Ps 35:1-2

Arise, O LORD, in Your anger; lift Yourself up because of the rage of my enemies; rise up for me to the judgment You have commanded! Ps 7:6

You who save those who trust *in You* from those who rise up against *them*. Ps 17:7

He delivers me from my enemies. You also lift me up above those who rise against me; You have delivered me from the violent man. Ps 18:48

Enemy persecution is intended to damage the soul and make a believer doubt God. The answer is to redouble your faith in God and trust that he will deliver you. This deliverance is either protection from the harm intended by means of escape or empowerment by the Spirit to cope with the persecution and suffer it (e.g. martyrdom).

### **Rejection and betrayal**

This was a severe affliction experienced by Paul towards the end of his life. Many colleagues rejected him and some even turned away from the faith.



All who {are} in Asia, of whom is Phygellus and Hermogenes, have turned away from me. 2 Tim 1:15

For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica -- Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. 2 Tim 4:10

At my first defence no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. 2 Tim 4:16

A key aspect of the humiliation of Jesus suffered in his life on Earth was the rejection of his own people (Acts 4:10-11). The OT prophets were mostly rejected, persecuted and killed by the very people they spoke to (Lk 11:47-50; Acts 7:52).

Those who fully pursue the truth and strive to be a testimony to Jesus will know the rejection of their brethren; it is a divine pattern. Look at the disapproval heaped upon John Calvin to this day.

So, rejection is never far from the Christian but some allow rejection to depress their soul and damage their personality. Rejection for the truth should be a badge of honour not a means of trauma.

The way to deal with the rejection of men is to focus on your acceptance in Christ with God. The fact that you are a son of God, in Christ, far outweighs whatever men do to you.

Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, you people in whose heart is My law: Do not fear the reproach of men, nor be afraid of their insults. Isa 51:7

Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. Lk 6:22-23

The key of ministry is to focus upon Christ and doing God's will, caring nothing about what other people think or what they say to you. You are accountable to God not men. God is your judge; focus upon doing what pleases God, even if everybody else denounces you. The more you speak the truth, the more you will confront relevant issues and lose friends. The world is the enemy of God and sadly many Christians are too focused upon this present world; not necessarily sinful, but too worldly oriented. Thus speaking divine truth is confrontational and cuts across those focused on the world.

Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. Rm 14:4

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.  
Rm 14:10

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. 1 Cor 4:3-5

Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another? Jam 4:11-12

## Conclusion

The soul is a vessel, an organ, in the person that directs the body. As a vessel it can be damaged, needing restoration. It is God that restores the soul and brings it back to proper function. However, the believer must trust God to do this and willingly put himself in the place where God can help him. Thus the believer must: 1) acknowledge that there is a problem. 2) Ask God to restore his soul. 3) Trust that God will do this. 4) Continue in God's will.

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